

Biography

David Dutton reviews the political and intellectual career of E. D. Simon, 1st Baron Simon of Wythenshawe

E. D. Simon: intell



Ernest Emil
Darwin Simon, 1st
Baron Simon of
Wythenshawe (1879–
1960).

Photo: Lafayette,
26 November 1926
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Ideological in politics

IHAVE LOOKED BACK at history', declared Tony Blair towards the end of one of his many semi-clandestine meetings with Paddy Ashdown prior to the general election of 1997, as the two leaders discussed 'the Project', the possibility of long-term cooperation between their two parties. 'The great mistake', Blair continued, 'was that Labour and the Liberals fought because they misunderstood each other in the early part of [the twentieth] century.' The essence of Blair's historical understanding was that the early Labour Party and the Edwardian Liberals were fundamentally components of the same movement, that the breakdown of the so-called Progressive Alliance had been unnecessary and that this fracture had had the effect of turning the twentieth century into an era of Conservative domination. 'It was such nonsense', he insisted on another occasion, 'that Keynes and Bevan and Beveridge were all in different parties.'² Such sweeping judgements come more easily to politicians than to cautious historians, but Blair's analysis is not without support among the latter. Most notably, Peter Clarke, musing on the potential triumph of 'progressivism', has argued that enough common ground existed between Edwardian Liberalism and the preponderant social democracy of the early Labour Party to produce eventual fusion – but for the intrusion of the First World War.³ Historians remain divided as to whether the war marked the definitive end of the Progressive Alliance or merely a regrettable interruption. If, however, the 1920s had indeed witnessed its reinstatement, as many Liberals at least fervently hoped, it seems likely that E. D. Simon would have been in the vanguard of the movement.

Ernest Darwin Simon was born on 9 October 1879 in Manchester, a city with which he would be closely associated throughout his long life, the son of successful German immigrants. His father's engineering companies offered Ernest the financial security upon which to pursue a political career, even during a period of palpable decline in the fortunes of the Liberal Party. The eldest of seven children, he took control of the family business at the age of just 20, when his father died in

1899. At the time, he was an engineering student at Pembroke College, Cambridge, having previously attended Rugby School.

But Simon's early years were marred by an intense shyness. 'I was till recently abnormally and extraordinarily nervous ... I probably worked more, and never learnt to talk or tell a story. I never had the courage to LAUGH till I was 28!!'⁴ Though he later gained in self-confidence, Simon remained socially awkward, lacking both a sense of humour and the capacity for 'small talk', and was always something of a difficult companion. It was said that, when entertaining guests, any feelings of hospitality could be overwhelmed soon after 9.30 p.m. by the conviction that it was now time for bed.⁵ His financial success went hand in hand with a strong social conscience and he felt serious scruples about the relative luxury of Moorlands, his house in Didsbury in Manchester. In the 1920s, such feelings induced him to buy the historic, half-timbered Wythenshawe Hall together with 250 acres of surrounding parkland on the outskirts of the city and to present it, without conditions, to the city corporation. With a simplicity that sat somewhat uneasily alongside his considerable intellect, Simon 'wanted to "do good", he expected others to want to do good, and he was surprised when they did not'.⁶

Simon was elected unopposed to Manchester City Council in 1911 as Liberal representative for Withington, but he accepted from the outset of his political career that he felt much in common with the newly established Labour Party. The Fabians, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, proved a strong influence, especially as a result of their Minority Report for the Royal Commission on the Poor Law. As he explained to his mother in 1910, Sidney Webb

... is the only man of real ability I know who treats such [social, political and educational] matters in a purely scientific spirit, his one object being impartially to find out the actual truth – he seems to me to have exactly my type of mind. And to find that a man who thinks in my way has been able to achieve so much is very cheering.⁷

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ED Simon: Intellectual in politics

He was early associated with questions of social improvement. An interest in smoke abatement began in 1910 and culminated twelve years later in the publication of his first book.⁸ Work on the Manchester Sanitary (later Public Health) Committee initiated a life-long commitment to the improvement of the nation's housing stock.

It was in collaboration with the Webbs that, in 1913, Simon helped to set up the *New Statesman*. The Webbs saw the new publication primarily in terms of giving a boost to the Labour and socialist movement, but Simon, who provided financial support of £1,000 to help get the project off the ground, admired the way in which the Fabians applied factual measurement and scientific analysis to political and social problems, even if he did not agree with everything that appeared in the *New Statesman's* pages. At this stage at least his Liberalism remained intact. In August 1914, in common with the majority of his fellow Liberals, he reluctantly accepted that Germany's aggression left Britain little alternative but to resist her by force. He attested for military service under the Derby Scheme at the beginning of 1916, but always assumed that he would never be called up because of the important work being carried out by his engineering company. Yet all three of his brothers fought and died in the course of the conflict. As with many others, the experience of war, albeit away from the trenches, encouraged Simon to broaden his political ambitions. By April 1918, he had become chairman of the Withington Divisional Association and a member of the Executive of the Manchester Liberal Federation. He proposed to persuade the latter

... to produce a post-war party programme, so as to have something to put against the excellent programme prepared by Webb for Labour, and to know where we start. Have quite decided that for the present the Liberal Party is the right place for me notwithstanding the attractiveness of the Labour programme.⁹

The coming of peace and the decision to hold an immediate general election forced Simon to decide between the alternative leaders of a now divided Liberal Party. Five days after the armistice and almost accidentally, he found himself joining a delegation of Manchester Liberals led by C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian* as they called upon Lloyd George to avoid a damaging split with Asquith. The prime minister insisted that he remained a Liberal, but that an on-going coalition was the prerequisite of successful post-war reconstruction and that he would fight any Liberal who did not support the coalition.¹⁰ For Simon the choice involved 'a great mental struggle, whether to support the Coalition and be elected, or to refuse to compromise'. Not surprisingly, he sought the advice of the Webbs. They opposed cooperation with Lloyd George, and Simon was 'as usual persuaded by them'. With

Simon's backing the Withington Liberals adopted an independent Liberal candidate, George Burditt.¹¹

Simon threw himself enthusiastically into the campaign. 'I am thoroughly enjoying it. My only regret is that I am helping Burditt, instead of standing myself!'¹² Before long, however, he was complaining of the lack of relevant content in his party's campaign:

The utter lack on the part of the Liberal Party and the [Manchester] candidates in particular of any knowledge of or interest in industrial problems, and the great question of equality between the two nations of England, is most striking.¹³

As a local newspaper pointed out, only Labour stood out as the party with an 'entirely independent standpoint and a vision for the future'.¹⁴

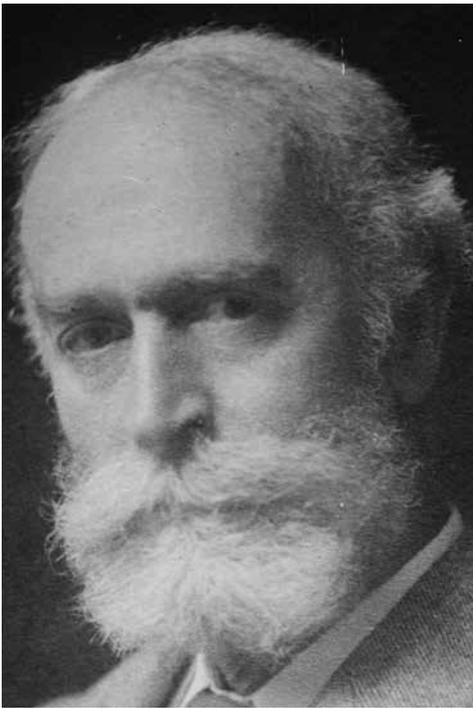
By polling day, Simon knew that independent Liberalism would be heavily defeated. The prevailing atmosphere of the campaign depressed him. In Withington,

... Carter, the Unionist and Coalition candidate is ignorant, vulgar and brutal, and has got in by screaming angrily 'Support the man who won the war, hang the Kaiser, and make Germany pay'. The whole business is revolting and depressing in the extreme.

His feelings against Lloyd George were particularly strong. The prime minister had neglected the key questions of the League of Nations abroad and reconstruction at home and, by following 'the lust for blood of the yellow press', had reduced the contest to 'the lowest level of demagoguery'. By playing to the 'lowest passions of the ignorant man of the new electorate', Lloyd George had won a landslide victory and a mandate for 'a policy of Prussianism and revenge'.¹⁵

Nationally, the Asquithian rump of the once dominant Liberal Party was reduced to just twenty-eight MPs. Undaunted, Simon re-entered the sphere of local politics and was re-elected to the City Council in November 1919. His thinking was still focused on the possibilities of Liberal-Labour cooperation. In the city 'extraordinary Labour wins' had overthrown a thirty-year-old Conservative domination and replaced it with a 'working progressive majority'. This, he wrote, 'opens up vistas of useful and even thrilling work which I can hardly yet grasp'.¹⁶ The problem, of which Simon seems to have been less conscious, was whether the game of parliamentary cooperation and electoral pacts was one that Labour was willing to play. Though it continued to welcome defections from the ranks of Liberalism, Labour was far less inclined on strategic grounds than before 1914 to contemplate party realignment. Ramsay MacDonald, in particular, understanding the realities of two-party politics in a first-past-the-post electoral system, saw that Labour's

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C P Scott in 1919

Beatrice and Sidney Webb, c 1895



long-term interests lay in driving Liberals to the political periphery and establishing his own party as the only viable alternative to Conservative government. Tellingly, Peter Clarke has noted that, by the 1920s, any ideological convergence between Liberals and social democrats was counter-balanced by a tactical divergence, 'much to the frustration of those [like Simon] of a progressive outlook'.¹⁷

Yet, at a time when Liberalism generally struggled – largely unsuccessfully – to re-establish its pre-war ascendancy, the party did enjoy something of an intellectual renaissance, a process in which Simon played a significant role. Convinced of the need for new policies to suit a new age, in the winter of 1918–19 Simon began to organise meetings of local businessmen at his Manchester home to discuss industrial questions. Ramsay Muir, then Professor of Modern History at the University of Manchester, was also invited and, after a few meetings, produced a short book, *Liberalism and Industry* (1920). Its publication, Simon later recalled, 'marked the beginning of a long campaign to persuade the leaders of the Party to adopt a forward industrial policy' which culminated, nearly a decade later, in the adoption of the famous 'Yellow Book'.¹⁸ From the beginning, Simon's aim was to reshape the party's thinking in such a way as to recognise the changes occasioned by the war and to offer a programme that could at least compete with Labour in terms of its appeal to the working-class electorate. This raised again the possibility of a change of political allegiance:

A modified radical party would suit me best, or a new combination of radical Labour if only that could be brought about ... But about four fifths of the people whose political views I admire

are in the Labour Party! Of course if I do go for Parliament it would be rather nice to stand for Withington; and if I made up my mind and worked for it I could probably be Liberal (or for that matter Labour!) candidate next time.¹⁹

Yet bringing the Liberal Party to the position where Simon's dilemma would be resolved was no easy task. Looking back in 1925, he wrote:

It is the penalty of belonging to a party with a great past, that some of one's colleagues who are natural conservatives will live in their past, and regard it as the whole duty of a Liberal to cheer lustily when [W. E.] Gladstone, or Free Trade, or Home Rule are mentioned. These Liberals are probably all over 60 years of age ... and the only way they can serve the cause of Liberalism is by silence.²⁰

Many within the party leadership shared Henry Gladstone's conviction that the platitudes of the nineteenth century retained their relevance: 'Peace, Retrenchment and Reform, the fine old watchwords are again the necessity of the moment!'²¹ As Michael Bentley has concluded, 'All too plainly, liberalism was out of date'.²²

At a meeting at Simon's Herefordshire farm²³ in the spring of 1920, at which the guests included Muir, Edward Scott, the son of the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, and the author Philip Guedalla, the notion of the Liberal Summer School was devised. The idea was to establish a forum for individuals of Liberal inclination, though not necessarily formal party affiliation, to explore a range of social and economic issues. The first such gathering in Grasmere in September 1921 would bring together the existing Manchester group and such Cambridge intellectuals



as J. M. Keynes, Walter Layton and Hubert Henderson. According to J. A. Hobson, it was 'much the best thing of the kind he had been at', with all the discussions being conducted 'in a truly Liberal spirit', a fine tribute, 'coming from so distinguished a member of the Labour party'. 'I am really hopeful', recorded Simon, 'that it will be the beginning of a genuine awakening of thought and study in Liberal circles.'²⁴

By the summer of 1920 Simon had become more optimistic about his existing party. 'The Manchester movement finally begins to have possibilities', he noted. A resolution demanding an industrial policy, sent by the group to the Leamington meeting of the National Liberal Federation, did not meet with the anticipated rejection. 'We were received with open arms, given seats on the platform and our resolution accepted by the official gang.'²⁵ Against this background Simon was adopted as prospective Liberal parliamentary candidate for the Withington division in March 1921. His prospects were thought to be good. Six months later, however, he was invited to become Manchester's Lord Mayor, an appointment which traditionally precluded party political activity. A serious attack of pneumonia at the start of February 1922 added to his difficulties. The Lloyd George coalition fell from power following the celebrated meeting of Tory MPs at the Carlton Club on 19 October. With polling fixed for 15 November and Simon's mayoralty not ending until 9 November, his active campaign was necessarily brief. He focused on the key issues of housing and unemployment. The whole community, he urged, should accept responsibility for ensuring that every willing worker should receive either work or appropriate maintenance, while 'a larger policy was needed in respect of housing'.²⁶ The Conservative candidate, Dr T. Watts, stressed the more mundane needs of the electorate, campaigning for cheap beer! Despite a swing of almost 18 per cent to the Liberals, Watts narrowly emerged victorious.²⁷

Wythenshawe Hall in 2005; a 16th-century medieval timber-framed historic house and former manor house, Simon bought it and donated it to Manchester Corporation in 1926; in 1930 it was opened to the public as a museum.

Prime Minister Baldwin's wish to introduce a policy of tariff reform necessitated a further reference to the electorate and a second election was called after little more than a year. Despite underlying indications of continuing decline, the Liberal Party, united (superficially at least) for the first time since 1916, experienced an electoral revival, albeit one that still left it stubbornly in third place in the national poll. In Withington, emphasising his commitment to a bold housing policy, Simon was comfortably elected to parliament.²⁸ But a private diary note, drawn up around this time, reveals his on-going doubts about the party he would now represent in the House of Commons. The party leadership was a source of particular concern:

Saw something of Sir Donald Maclean [who had effectively led the parliamentary party pending Asquith's return to the Commons following his by-election victory at Paisley in February 1920] and Lord Gladstone [then Director of Party Headquarters] at Cambridge. Asquith and [John] Simon [widely regarded as heir apparent to the leadership of the Asquithian party] in comparison are angels of light. Maclean an amiable goodlooking stupid country solicitor – Gladstone runs the Liberal organisation as a happy family, all on Christian name terms. He drops in on Geoffrey Howard [who had responsibility for extra-parliamentary organisation] for a cup of tea twice a week. Knows literally nothing about the NLF; no touch with MPs ... The absolute limit of amiable helplessness.

Simon's often-quoted conclusion pointed to the party's one hope – as he at least saw it. 'What a party! No leaders. No organisation. No policy! Only a Summer School! But it is still worth an effort.'²⁹

Simon lost no time in delivering his maiden speech in January 1924. Having served as chairman of the Housing Committee on Manchester City Council from 1919 to 1923, it was no surprise that he chose to speak on the same subject. But Simon's speech had more than the symbolic significance that usually attaches to such occasions. On the basis of his experience of Liberal–Labour cooperation over housing in Manchester, he used it to justify Liberal support for the formation of a Labour government:

We believe, and I think in this we are in almost complete agreement with our friends on the Labour benches, that it is the duty of the Government to use all their powers and resources to build houses until we have cleared off the overcrowding which is such a disgrace to our civilisation and cleared off the slums which are an even greater disgrace.³⁰

At the end of the debate, and granted that the general election had failed to give any party an

overall Commons majority, Baldwin's Tory government was voted down and a minority Labour administration headed by Ramsay MacDonald duly took its place. The new prime minister privately expressed his admiration for Simon's contribution, while the latter had done much to establish himself as his party's expert on the whole question of housing.³¹ Over the months that followed he made frequent interventions in debates on this subject, sometimes less supportive of Labour's position than his maiden speech had implied. Simon's detailed knowledge and understanding often exposed the shortcomings of the Labour minister, John Wheatley. Simon also succeeded in piloting a private member's measure, the Prevention of Eviction Bill, on to the statute book.

Overall, however, Simon's first taste of parliamentary life proved a disappointing experience. His hopes that a continuing Liberal-Labour majority would open the way for constructive cooperation in the fields of foreign affairs, unemployment and education, as well as housing, proved largely unfounded. 'No Labour leader ever thanked a Liberal for support or help' and it became increasingly apparent that Labour's ambition was to kill off the Liberal Party rather than sustain it. MacDonald himself was 'vain and self-righteous' with an 'unfortunate habit' of telling lies in the House of Commons.³² Just as seriously, Simon saw little reason for optimism in his own party. In the conflict of loyalty that had confronted every Liberal since 1916, his inclination hitherto had always been to side with Asquith and against Lloyd George. But there was a problem here. Since the fall of the coalition, Lloyd George had increasingly positioned himself as the potential leader of the Left of the party, but Asquith 'who is really a Whig is accepted as a better Liberal than he'.³³ It took time for figures such as Simon to accept that Asquith would remain content to reiterate traditional, but dated, Liberal principles and that it was Lloyd George who offered the only hope of an updated and relevant party programme. The brief months of Labour government did much to clarify Simon's thinking:

Throughout the session, except for a few big points, [Asquith] took no trouble to understand the problems, his only action was inaction; a policy of masterly inactivity carried to extreme lengths. Anything further removed from 'leadership' in any true sense of the word it is difficult to conceive. His brain is excellent, probably as good as ever if he would only apply it. It is the interest that is lacking. He is now prepared tacitly to accept the position which he refused in 1916 when L-G offered to let him remain PM so long as he did not interfere with the direction and the management of the war by L-G and the War Cabinet. If he acted during the war with the same utter lack of decision and energy as during

this session, then it was absolutely necessary to turn him out.³⁴

Granted its minority status, the first Labour administration was always more likely to be a short, practical experience in the mechanics of government than an extended period of legislative achievement. It fell from power in the autumn of 1924 and the country faced its third general election in the space of two years. Strapped for cash and fielding only 340 candidates, the Liberal Party faced predictable disaster, entering the contest with the appearance of a 'disorganised rabble'.³⁵ The progress made in 1923 at the expense of the Tories was now emphatically reversed. Three-quarters of the parliamentary party went down to defeat, including Simon at Withington.³⁶ It was inevitably time for a further exercise of reflection and self-analysis.

Simon saw four possible courses of action for himself: to do all he could to revive the Liberal Party, working hard in the Manchester Liberal Federation and the Summer Schools, and speaking whenever asked; to do the same, but half-heartedly, giving only limited time to politics; to withdraw altogether from national politics for the time being; or to join the Labour Party. His political philosophy remained unchanged and seemed to point towards the last of these options:

My political aim is to give the best chance to every child, and to remove the excessive inequalities of today. That is practically the aim of Labour ... All the enthusiasm and driving force is in the Labour Party, except for a few fanatics on land, or temperance or Free Trade. Liberals as a party have little in common except hatreds – hatred of protection and hatred of socialism. The great question is whether a sombre constructive Summer School policy can ever be made to appeal to – or even be understood by – the mass of voters. I don't think any democracy has ever been interested in such a policy of reason and hard thinking. They believe that Labour stands for the working man and Conservatism for the rich, and that Liberalism is some half-way house, full of compromise, no ideas except Free Trade.

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At the same time two factors stood in the way of Simon's abandoning Liberalism and joining Labour. The first was Labour's commitment to the nationalisation of the means of production. Interestingly, Simon's position on this issue was more nuanced than that of many fellow Liberals:

As an assertion of principle that the country would prosper under complete socialism this is a piece of unparalleled intellectual arrogance; as a statement of the direction in which we should aim to progress experimentally by encouraging every kind of experiment in cooperation, guilds, municipal development etc., I entirely agree with it.

Lloyd George, freed from the Conservative embrace of his coalition days, was determined to imbue Liberalism with a radical, progressive sense of purpose that had been absent for many years. This meant elevating the Summer School movement from the periphery to the forefront of the party's activity. For a brief interlude the party would display at its heart an intellectual liveliness that belied its parlous electoral standing.

The second impediment was more clear-cut. The Labour Party, he argued, was largely controlled by the trade unions, in the interests of a class rather than of the nation as a whole.

Simon's conclusion revealed a mind unresolved, yet veering towards the Labour option:

... the Labour Party is a very powerful party and will almost certainly remain so. If people like the Summer School hold aloof, its two faults will be accentuated. If we join we can work from inside to reduce them.

As it was, the division of the progressive forces at the 1924 general election had given the Conservatives a parliamentary majority that would keep them in government for five years. The presence of just one progressive party was the logical goal. Indeed, a reasonably strong Liberal Party, itself probably dependent on the introduction of electoral reform, would have the effect of strengthening the Tories by splitting the progressive vote. Should not Liberals of Simon's mould 'become a wing of Labour and try to guide them on wise lines'?

The time has come to consider this very seriously: the hopeless state of Liberal leadership is one of the main factors – if we had a Gladstone who cared for the condition of the people, the fight would be worthwhile. But it is a bleak prospect to spend the next four years struggling to teach an apathetic rank and file something they won't trouble to learn.³⁷

Sadly for Simon, Gladstone was not available (and W. E.'s sons Herbert and Henry, both still active in the party's ranks, were not what Simon had in mind!). But there was Lloyd George, and it was his enthusiasm for what Simon was trying to do that persuaded Simon, for the time being at least, to remain within the Liberal fold. Party leader in succession to Asquith from October 1926, and in practice its driving force for several months before that, Lloyd George, freed from the Conservative embrace of his coalition days, was determined to imbue Liberalism with a radical, progressive sense of purpose that had been absent for many years. This meant elevating the Summer School movement from the periphery to the forefront of the party's activity. For a brief interlude the party would display at its heart an intellectual liveliness that belied its parlous electoral standing. With a subvention of £10,000 from his notorious political fund, Lloyd George invited the leading lights of the Summer School to carry out an in-depth inquiry into industrial policy. No conditions were attached. Lloyd George 'had solemnly undertaken that he would use no veto, nor interfere in any way with the findings of the committee, so that the Summer School could feel that its independence was not jeopardised; but he asked to be allowed to take part in its deliberations'.³⁸

He showed his personal commitment by inviting members of the Liberal Industrial Inquiry for working weekends at his Surrey home in Churt. 'He was a perfect host', recalled Simon. 'He gave us the benefit of his vast experience; he never made the least attempt to use his position to influence our report, except by contributing to the discussion on an equality with all other members.'³⁹

Lloyd George's financial support facilitated more elaborate research than would otherwise have been the case. Qualified individuals were invited to hearings irrespective of their political views, while investigating teams reported from foreign experience and researchers submitted a mass of detailed memoranda. The inquiry brought together an impressive array of politicians and economists, including Walter Layton, Maynard Keynes, Herbert Samuel and Ramsay Muir. Simon was vice-chairman and chairman of the Labour and Trade Unions sub-committee. Much of the initial draft of the resulting 'Yellow Book', formally published in February 1928 under the title *Britain's Industrial Future*, was written by Simon himself. It was, he later suggested with a forgivable absence of modesty, 'the best survey of British industry published in the inter-war period'.⁴⁰ Certainly, 'the Summer School had reached the peak of its influence within the Liberal party'.⁴¹ The 'Yellow Book' argued that, in the post-war world, the traditional antipathy of individualism and socialism had become unreal and put forward far-reaching proposals for government planning and intervention in the economy. It aimed to show how poverty and unemployment could be reduced and equal economic opportunity be offered to all. A key feature of the 'Yellow Book' was the Keynesian idea of deficit financing – unbalancing the budget in order to pump-prime the economy. This involved extensive schemes of public works, with an emphasis on road building. Among the report's more innovative features were a call for national minimum wages for each industry, provision for compulsory profit-sharing schemes and the introduction of workers' councils to share management responsibilities.

It was hard to deny that Liberalism was enjoying an intellectual renaissance. Simon reflected on what the Summer School movement had achieved:

A great success – I knew exactly what I wanted. I learnt from Webb and [R. H.] Tawney the necessity of an industrial policy – the Liberal leaders ignored it. Through the Summer School we both [Simon and Muir] worked out the policy and in just under 10 years effectively imposed it on the party. Biggest achievement the Yellow Book ... I think it is a model of what political parties ought to do in an ideal democracy!⁴²

Many Liberals entered the general election campaign, called by Baldwin for 30 May 1929,

sincerely believing that their party had a realistic prospect of regaining power. Those on the party's right wing retained profound doubts about the direction in which Lloyd George was travelling, but most succeeded in presenting an appearance of unity for the benefit of the electorate. But doubts of a different kind existed on the part of the Summer School's principals. 'Whether [the 'Yellow Book'] is of any use to the Liberal party politically', pondered Simon, 'is another and less important matter.'⁴³ Muir was more explicit:

[Liberalism] had to be given a 'constructive programme' not as a bait to catch the electorate, but as a means of keeping its soul alive. That has been an immense piece of work ... Of course, we know that very few people will read [*Britain's Industrial Future*]. It won't reach the electorate ... [T]he electors don't vote on policies: we are governed by a wavering illiterate mass which is incapable of understanding policies.⁴⁴

Privately, Muir predicted that the Liberal Party might only manage to raise its tally of MPs to around eighty. The result was even worse. The victim of the first-past-the-post electoral system, Liberals secured nearly a quarter of the popular vote, but just fifty-nine MPs. In the context of another hung parliament, the Liberals again held the balance of power, but with as yet no concerted policy on the attitude to be adopted towards the resulting minority Labour government. Narrowly regaining the Withington constituency he had lost in 1924,⁴⁵ Simon still pinned his hopes on Liberal-Labour cooperation, 'looking forward to legislation on the fruitful field which is common to both parties'. But he was disappointed by the tone of Lloyd George's speech at the first post-election party meeting, which he found 'threatening'.⁴⁶

Au fond, Lloyd George and Simon probably agreed on the basic aim of keeping Labour in power. Indeed, by the middle of 1931 the party leader seems to have been engaged in clandestine talks with the government about the creation of a formal coalition which might have seen him emerge as Foreign Secretary or Chancellor. But, wary of recreating the impression of subservience which had come to characterise the Liberal position during the first Labour government, Lloyd George was neither clear nor consistent in articulating his overall strategy to his own party. Simon, in fact, discerned three distinct changes in his position over the first year of Labour government: 'a first one of peace, followed by one of war; then again a peaceful period. Now, judging by the last meeting, Mr Lloyd George intends another period of war.'⁴⁷ Simon had little time for such tergiversations. For him, policies were what mattered, not narrow party considerations. His diary for the period offers a revealing commentary on his growing disillusionment with his leader and the Liberal Party as a whole. Not

only did the hard-won unity of the late 1920s collapse; in addition, Simon found himself at odds even with some who had hitherto been his closest allies. His personal history mirrored that of his party. By the first months of 1931 Liberalism was visibly collapsing as a coherent political force.

Simon's first impressions of the Labour government were entirely favourable. When he praised the 1924 Housing Act, the Commons were reminded of his closeness to Labour. Wheatley, Labour's former Housing Minister, responded in kind:

All of us who have taken an interest in the housing problem rejoice to have him with us again ... I could not wish for a finer eulogy of the Act for which I was responsible than the one to which we have listened this afternoon, and I should be very cold indeed if I did not feel thrilled with satisfaction when the hon. Member described ... the effect that I made during my period of office.⁴⁸

The raising of the school leaving age and the continuation of the Wheatley housing subsidies were, Simon argued, 'two really important things' which showed that Labour would pursue social reform in a totally different spirit from the previous Conservative government. 'In these two cases they have done exactly what a good Liberal Government would also have done.' It was therefore self-evidently in the national interest to keep Labour in power and for Liberals to do all they could to help the government to carry out 'an effective progressive policy'. Simon recognised a political downside. If Labour performed well, they rather than the Liberals would get all the credit. On the other hand, if Labour was turned out prematurely, the electorate would think they had not been given a fair chance and would then punish the Liberal Party at the ballot box. So 'the right course, *even from a narrow party point of view*, is to give them steady support, at least until the Speaker's Conference [on electoral reform] has reported'. At this stage, Simon was hopeful that the majority of the Liberal parliamentary party was of the same mind. But he sensed also a minority group who hoped that Labour 'would go too far and that we could then attack them'. The trouble with such people, he tellingly added, 'is, I am afraid, fundamental – they don't want economic equality'.⁴⁹

By the end of the year such concerns were increasing. The tendency, noted Simon, was for individual MPs to consider the effect of every parliamentary vote on their own constituencies. Among the 'rather [more] broad-minded' the tendency was to consider the fate of the Liberal Party at the next election and the strategic question of 'when and how we should cooperate with or oppose the Labour Party'. But 'the number of people who take my view of being interested almost solely in the measures themselves,

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and disregarding both tactics and strategy, seems to me infinitesimal'.⁵⁰ He became increasingly unhappy with the performance of Lloyd George, interpreting the leader's stance over the government's Coal Mines Bill in the winter of 1929–30 as an attempt to bring it down. In fact, Lloyd George was probably trying to force the government to acknowledge its need of Liberal support.⁵¹ But he seemed strangely reluctant to share his thinking with the parliamentary party. 'The trouble is', concluded Simon, 'that he always comes on important matters with his mind made up, and that however much discussion there may be, it is a certainty that the Party decision will be exactly what Lloyd George wants. The real conditions of discussion and agreement do not exist.'⁵²

By the summer of 1930 Simon seemed ready to break ranks, setting out his thinking in a long letter to the chief whip, Sir Robert Hutchison:

The fundamental question for the Liberal Party, which has never been properly discussed at a Party meeting, is whether, broadly, in the present circumstances, we prefer a Labour Government, with ourselves holding the balance, or whether, on the other hand, we should prefer to force a General Election, which would almost inevitably result in a Conservative Government with a large majority over both the other Parties combined.

From a national point of view, Simon was clear that the first option was much to be preferred. The Labour government's foreign policy, attitude towards India and opposition to tariffs all pointed in the same direction. 'Generally speaking, we have at present, in effect, a Moderate Liberal Government.' His hope was that, if a general election could be delayed for another year, an improvement in world trade might lead to a substantial reduction in unemployment, making it possible to avoid an overall Conservative majority in the new parliament. Certainly, an immediate election would leave the Liberals weaker than they then were. The right policy for the party to follow was 'one of peace with the Government', providing them with a dependable parliamentary majority, while 'influencing them as far as possible to act on Liberal lines'.

Simon moved inexorably to his conclusion:

I am, therefore, *not* prepared to vote against the Government on any issue which would cause their resignation, unless and until the situation is changed to such an extent that it seems in the interests of the nation, and of the Liberal Party, that a General Election should take place. Further, if the Liberal Party should decide to make further attempts to defeat the Government ... before such change in the situation arises, I should consider it my plain duty to vote with the Government.⁵³

In the event, Simon's letter was never sent.

Hutchison resigned as chief whip in the autumn after a display of extreme parliamentary gymnastics – defying a whip which he himself had sent out.

But, if Simon appeared ready to go his own way, so too did many other members of the parliamentary party. Three-way splits in the Commons – votes in support of the government, against it and abstentions – had become commonplace. Harry Nathan, MP for Bethnal Green North-East, judged that the party was 'done for'. Its organisation was falling to pieces and disunity in parliament was communicating itself to the party outside Westminster. He 'did not see how we could fight the next election as a party'.⁵⁴ Simon was of the same mind. 'The Party is not in any way organised. There is no consultation or consideration of policy ... The Party exists for each man to carry out his own job and otherwise to register and support the personal conclusions of the Leader.'⁵⁵

Simon added to the party's divisions at the 1930 Summer School, when he suggested that, by buying British motorcars rather than American ones, the individual purchaser could have a beneficial effect on domestic employment. The particular significance of his remark lay in the fact that the car industry was one of only a small number that benefited from the protection of the wartime McKenna Duties. Simon's long-term colleague, Walter Layton, disagreed, while Ramsay Muir complained of the effect of his pronouncement on efforts to maintain party unity, but Keynes and Hobson endorsed Simon's iconoclastic departure. Simon went on to argue that the existence of an apparently 'permanent surplus of unemployed labour' rendered free trade irrelevant and that a temporary revenue tariff of 10 per cent should be imposed.⁵⁶

At one level Simon's departure was unsurprising. 'Throughout 1930 the ranks of the free traders were thinned by the desertion of economists, industrialists, bankers and trade unionists.'⁵⁷ The onset of the world economic crisis following the Wall Street Crash of October 1929 compelled all but the most obtuse of Liberals to re-examine their fundamental beliefs. But the apostasy of a leading spokesman of the Manchester School, so long synonymous with the doctrine of free trade, was striking nonetheless and precipitated 'a considerable fluttering in the Liberal dovecot'.⁵⁸ Habitues of the Summer School were used to conducting their debates away from the glare of publicity. But Simon's remarks figured prominently in the press and contributed to the growing perception of a party in the process of disintegration.⁵⁹

The appointment of Archibald Sinclair to succeed Hutchison as chief whip gave Simon cause for renewed hope, but any improvement in the Liberal performance in the Commons was short-lived. Indeed, the issue of land taxes, badly

'The fundamental question for the Liberal Party, which has never been properly discussed at a Party meeting, is whether, broadly, in the present circumstances, we prefer a Labour Government, with ourselves holding the balance, or whether, on the other hand, we should prefer to force a General Election, which would almost inevitably result in a Conservative Government with a large majority over both the other Parties combined.'

It proved to be one of the shortest ministerial careers in modern history. 'I had about a fortnight at the Ministry of Health', he recorded.

mishandled by Lloyd George, gave Hutchison, (the unrelated) John Simon and Leslie Hore-Belisha the excuse they had been looking for formally to resign the Liberal whip on 26 June 1931. Ernest Simon gave vent to his disgust:

The whole question brings out very vividly the two main troubles with the Liberal Party at the present time: first of all the incredible ineptitude of Mr Lloyd George as a leader, and secondly the fact that many, and indeed most, of the members are interested mainly in their chance of being re-elected next time rather than considering broad questions of national welfare. Those who have seceded are all men who could not have been re-elected if the Tories opposed them.⁶⁰

By this time, however, crisis within the Labour cabinet was beginning to overshadow the more parochial dissensions of the Liberal Party. Simon was on a family holiday in Switzerland as matters came to a head with the Labour government resigning, to be replaced by an all-party National administration, still under the premiership of Ramsay MacDonald. To his surprise, Simon received an invitation from Herbert Samuel, now acting leader of the Liberals owing to Lloyd George's illness, to accept office as parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Health, the government department then in charge of housing. Simon himself was incapacitated by a carbuncle which necessitated surgery once he returned to London. But the post was kept open for him and, having received assurances that the government, formed to effect wide-ranging cuts in public expenditure, would not seek to reduce housing subsidies, he accepted the appointment.

It proved to be one of the shortest ministerial careers in modern history. 'I had about a fortnight at the Ministry of Health', he recorded:

I had ten questions to answer on my first day. They gave one the opportunity of seeing the head of the department concerned, and in each case I found no difficulty in getting out the necessary facts as a result of a few minutes' conversation. Nor did I have any difficulties in dealing with any supplementaries that were asked. The civil servants are all able and quite first-class at this sort of thing.

But Simon was less impressed by the preparedness of his Ministry to tackle the housing question:

The department seems to have no curiosity and no real desire to understand the housing problem, and has just not bothered its head seriously about the high rents in Manchester, although the head of the department makes the excuse that he has never had a Minister ready to stand up to Manchester and has therefore not been able to do anything.⁶¹

Such concerns were rendered irrelevant when the Tory-dominated government, against Liberal objections, called a general election for 27 October, to seek a 'doctor's mandate' to continue its economic policies. Simon had decided not to stand again in Withington but, having accepted appointment as a government minister, he felt obliged to contest the election and was invited to carry the National Government's colours in the constituency of Penryn and Falmouth in Cornwall. Here, despite a letter of endorsement from the prime minister, he was defeated by a Conservative, one of many victims of the lack of fraternal comradeship shown by supposed colleagues in the National Government.⁶²

Simon's career in party politics was effectively over. He had never become a House of Commons man in the sense of one who revelled in the traditions and rituals of the Palace of Westminster, or who felt comfortably at home in its bars and dining rooms. The 1931 general election left the Conservative Party in such a dominant position that it was unlikely to be unseated for at least a decade and, in any case, Simon now had more than enough evidence to write off the Liberal Party as a viable vehicle for his ambitions. At the same time, Labour's shift to the left in the early 1930s would not have made a change of political allegiance an attractive proposition. Though he would be persuaded to contest, unsuccessfully, the English Universities seat as an Independent⁶³ in 1946, following the death of Eleanor Rathbone, Simon, knighted in 1932, largely abandoned further political ambitions. Yet, as the National Government began its long tenure of power, he was still, in political terms, a relatively young man and it was never likely that his fertile mind would now wind down. Rather it was a time for new departures and initiatives.

Perhaps the most interesting was the Association for Education in Citizenship founded in 1934 in association with Mrs Eva Hubback, who had collaborated with Simon since before the First World War and who had been responsible for introducing him to his future wife, Shena Potter. Both had an input into the pamphlet *Education for Citizenship in Secondary Schools* which, anticipating the place later occupied by 'civics' in the school curriculum, argued that men and women had to be trained for the special task of being citizens and offered case studies of how the teaching of good citizenship could be integrated into academic subject matter. This task was judged to be central to 'the building of a just and efficient social order'.⁶⁴ A visit to the Soviet Union in 1936 (showing the continuing influence of the Webbs who had been there in 1932) had the specific purpose of studying Moscow's city government. It reinforced Simon's commitment to public ownership of the land as an essential prerequisite to successful town planning. More than half of *Moscow in the Making*, published in 1937, was Simon's work.

Symbolic of this new stage in Simon's life and career was a renewed focus upon Manchester. For one thing, his business interests had suffered badly with the onset of the world economic crisis and demanded more of his attention than hitherto. Both Henry Simon Ltd. and Simon Carves Ltd. had lost heavily in 1931 as a result of bad debts. More pleasingly, he was able to watch with satisfaction as the City Council, with his wife Shena playing a leading role, completed its scheme to create a garden suburb to the south of the River Mersey, with Wythenshawe Hall and its park, gifted by the Simons a few years earlier, at its heart.

The late 1930s saw a progressive worsening of the international scene which inevitably attracted the attention and concern of Simon's Liberal and socialist contemporaries. Though he recognised the potential threat to his hopes of a better social order, Simon was not tempted to re-enter the political fray. As his biographer puts it, 'the events which were driving Europe to disaster seemed to impinge on his consciousness like "noises off"'.⁶⁵ When the Second World War did break out, Simon readily offered his services, becoming Regional Information Officer for the North-Western Area at the Ministry of Information. In 1940 he was appointed Area Officer for the Ministry of Aircraft Production in the North-Western Region and, the following year, became deputy chairman of the Building Trade Council in the Ministry of Works. As the conflict progressed, his mind turned naturally to the problems of post-war reconstruction and he was inevitably attracted by the ideas coming out of the Labour Party. Under the imprint of Victor Gollancz, Simon's *Rebuilding Britain – a Twenty Year Plan* was published by the Left Book Club in the spring of 1945. He had lost none of his youthful vision or ambition:

... we can in twenty years rebuild Britain, so as to enable every inhabitant, child or adult, to live in a healthy home, in a neighbourhood so planned as to allow easy access for all members of the family to their places of work and recreation.⁶⁶

By the war's end there was nothing to stop him joining Labour, as his wife had done in 1935, though this would be as a simple statement of creed rather than a gesture of continuing personal ambition. The general election of 1945 reduced the Liberal Party to a state of near irrelevance and Labour's nationalisation plans appeared to be based on pragmatic necessity rather than doctrinaire socialism. He announced his decision in 1946 after a period of reflection in the Lake District,⁶⁷ and the following year accepted the offer of a peerage from a Labour government that was looking to strengthen its position in the upper chamber. But Simon was determined to use his new status to advocate the causes in which he believed rather

than to become a party hack. He took the title of Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, notwithstanding the objections of John Simon (by now Viscount Simon of Stackpole Elidor). In the context of the contemporary debate over nationalisation, he was already taking an interest in the BBC as a body which worked effectively without competition or the need to make a profit. Soon after his ennoblement, Simon was invited to become the corporation's chairman where he joined an old Manchester friend, William Haley, who was already in post as director-general. During Simon's five years in this job he was, based on his experience of American television, an implacable opponent of the introduction of commercial broadcasting. In 1950 the television play, *Party Manners*, caused considerable controversy with its reference to Labour ministers endangering national security by releasing secrets of the atomic bomb. Simon used his powers to prevent a repeat showing of the programme, on the grounds that it could undermine respect for parliamentary democracy, but it was a decision he soon came to regret.⁶⁸ His memoir of his time at the BBC, *The BBC from Within* (1953) again anticipated later debates with its criticism of the constitutional relationship between the chairman and governors on the one hand and the director-general on the other.

When awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Manchester in 1944, Simon was described by the Public Orator as 'the embodiment of perpetual youth, inexhaustible vigour and insatiable appetite for experiment and adventure'.⁶⁹ If his final years witnessed some understandable signs of waning physical powers, his mind seemed as alert and productive as ever. 'Late' interests included the marked rise in global population, leading to his close involvement in the International Planned Parenthood Federation. A £15,000 bequest allowed for the establishment, at Simon's death, of the Simon Population Trust. He also became convinced that 'the nuclear problem was incomparably more serious than my favourite population problem or anything else' and he joined the executive committee of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, while remaining uneasy about the tactics of civil disobedience.⁷⁰ At the same time, his continuing excitement about the future was evident in his energetic efforts to raise funds for the Jodrell Bank telescope project under the direction of Sir Bernard Lovell.

Much of Simon's energy was devoted to the University of Manchester, of whose council he had become chairman in 1941, and higher education in general. The Simon Fund set up in 1944 financed fellowships for mature students to pursue research in the social sciences. He also put much effort into the expansion of teaching and research in science and engineering, where Britain was beginning to fall behind competitor countries. A particular concern was to see Colleges of Technology integrated more fully, as in Manchester, into the university sector. Finally, on 11 May

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1960, Simon, speaking in the House of Lords, urged the government to set up a committee 'to enquire and report on the extent and nature of the provisions of full-time education for those over the age of eighteen, whether in universities or in other educational institutions'.⁷¹ At the end of a lengthy debate, the government expressed 'sympathy' for Simon's motion. Perhaps surprisingly, this was not the end of the matter. Seven months later, Prime Minister Macmillan announced the appointment of a committee under Lord Robbins to consider the long-term development of higher education in Britain. This would prove the starting point of the massive expansion of the next two decades. Sadly, Simon did not live to witness this denouement. He suffered a stroke at his cottage in the Lake District and died on 3 October 1960. He left an estate valued at almost £400,000, many millions in today's values.

How then should we assess the career of Ernest Simon and, in particular, his contribution to British Liberalism? Self-evidently, his stature does not depend upon his activities as a parliamentarian. Simon was an MP for a total of less than three years and a junior minister for a matter of weeks. He was primarily an ideas man, who strained tirelessly to give the Liberal Party an intellectual content relevant to the twentieth century and one that would leave it capable of competing against, or perhaps collaborating with, the advancing Labour movement. But what did those ideas represent? Does Simon's career illustrate the lost opportunities of the Progressive Alliance, opportunities which if taken would have transformed the political complexion of the entire twentieth century in the way that Blair and Ashdown later imagined? Perhaps. But many Liberals would always have found much of Simon's political philosophy hard to swallow. His form of municipal socialism stood at one extreme of the party's spectrum. They wanted in the 1920s to build their politics around the concept of resistance to socialism, as the large number of Conservative–Liberal pacts in local government testifies. Furthermore, Simon's vision took little account of the (essentially hostile) attitude of his would-be Labour partners. One historian has attributed the Liberal decision to install Labour in office in 1924 to a "progressive" delusion.⁷² So even a politician with far more charm and guile than Simon possessed would have struggled to bring his goal to fruition. Alternatively, then, Simon stands as a graphic illustration of the hopeless diversity which Liberals struggled to contain within a single political party.

At all events, Simon's impact upon his party's fortunes was real, but limited and temporary. He operated, of course, in an era of decline, a process that he attempted to arrest. For a few brief years, the draining away of young progressives from the Liberal to the Labour Party may have been slowed down. There is some evidence of increasing interest in Liberalism in the universities in

the late 1920s. But such trends did not survive the political crisis of 1929–31. The fate of the Summer Schools is instructive. The leading lights of the 1920s went their separate ways. Though meetings continued throughout the 1930s and indeed beyond, attendance dropped markedly and contemporaries noted a change in the composition of those who did take part. In 1934, Thomas Tweed, formerly general secretary of the Summer School movement, witnessed mostly elderly people with an anti-Labour bias.⁷³ In so far as the Summer Schools became, in Ramsay Muir's words, 'a sort of university for politicians', those politicians were largely Labour and Conservative rather than Liberal.⁷⁴ The movement's ideas were ruthlessly plundered, especially by post-Second World War Labour and Conservative governments. Indeed, it is an eloquent commentary on Simon's own ambiguous party political stance that he once declared that, 'if the Liberal Summer School does nothing else, it will at least provide ideas for the Labour Party'.⁷⁵

In his retirement from the academic world, David Dutton continues to investigate the recent political history of South-West Scotland.

- 1 P. Ashdown, *The Ashdown Diaries 1988–1997* (London, 2000), p. 508.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 456.
- 3 P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 406.
- 4 M. Stocks, *Ernest Simon of Manchester* (Manchester, 1963), p. 8. This biography, based on Simon's papers at Manchester Central Library, offers a serviceable narrative of his life. It is, however, now somewhat dated and lacks much in the way of context within the important debates of Liberal Party historiography, insofar as these were apparent at the time of its publication. The papers in Manchester, in particular Simon's diaries, are an important source for the history of the party in the 1920s, though the diaries lack the spontaneity and personal indiscretions often associated with this genre.
- 5 Stocks, *Simon*, p. 10.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 8 E. D. Simon and M. Fitzgerald, *The Smokeless City* (London, 1922).
- 9 Manchester Central Library, Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 addnl (495), diary 27 Apr. 1918. Extracts from Simon's papers appear by kind permission of Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives, Manchester City Council.
- 10 *Ibid.*, diary 16 Nov. 1918.
- 11 *Ibid.*, diary 26 Nov. 1918.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*, diary 15 Dec. 1918.
- 14 *Manchester City News*, 14 Dec. 1918.
- 15 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 addnl (495), diary 15 Dec. 1918.
- 16 Stocks, *Simon*, p. 60.
- 17 Clarke in V. Bogdanor (ed.), *Liberal Party Politics* (Oxford, 1983), p. 36.

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Indeed, it is an eloquent commentary on Simon's own ambiguous party political stance that he once declared that, 'if the Liberal Summer School does nothing else, it will at least provide ideas for the Labour Party'.

- 1 K. Reif and H. Schmitt, 'Nine Second-Order European Elections – AS conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Elections', *European Journal of Political Research*, 8/1 (1980), pp. 3–44.
- 2 J. Curtice and I. Montagu, 'The EU Debate: Has Brexit Polarised Britain?', in J. Curtice, E. Clery, J. Perry, M. Phillips and N. Rahmin (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 36th report*, (Nat-Cen Social Research, 2019). Available at <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-36/the-eu-debate.aspx>.
- 3 J. Curtice, 'Searching in Vain? The Hunt for a Brexit Compromise' (2019). Posted at <https://whatukthinks.org/eu/searching-in-vain-the-hunt-for-a-brexit-compromise/>.
- 4 J. Curtice, 'Why Leave Won the UK's EU Referendum', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55/51 (2017), pp. 19–37.
- 5 J. Curtice and I. Simpson, 'The 2017 Election: New Divides in British Politics?', in D. Phillips, J. Curtice, M. Phillips and J. Perry (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 35th report* (NatCen Social Research, 2018). Available at <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-35/voting.aspx>.
- 6 J. Curtice, S. Fisher and M. Steed, 'Appendix: An Analysis of the Results', in D. Butler and M. Westlake, *British Politics and European Elections 2004* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 201.

ED Simon: Intellectual in politics / continued from page 27

- 18 Simon, 'Liberalism and Industry' in S. Hodgson (ed.), *Ramsay Muir: An Autobiography and Some Essays* (London, 1943), pp. 181–2.
- 19 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 addnl (495), diary 7 Feb. 1920.
- 20 E. D. Simon, *The Inheritance of Riches* (London, 1925), p. 12.
- 21 Flintshire Record Office, Glynne-Gladstone MSS 964, Henry Gladstone to Herbert Gladstone 3 Apr. 1919.
- 22 M. Bentley, 'The Liberal Response to Socialism, 1918–29' in K. D. Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London, 1974), p. 47. As Simon himself later wrote, 'the party leaders still lived in the old ideas of *laissez faire*; their only industrial policy was free trade'. Hodgson (ed.), *Muir*, p. 181.
- 23 In August 1915, Simon's 18-month-old son, Roger, had contracted peritoneal tuberculosis. Happily, he made a full recovery. The illness was attributed to infected milk. Simon determined to investigate the subject thoroughly, becoming chairman of a Milk Subcommittee of Manchester Council's Sanitary Committee. At a practical level, he purchased a farm, Leadon Court near Ledbury, where he introduced a tuberculin-free herd of cattle.
- 24 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 addnl (495), diary 2 Oct. 1921.
- 25 *Ibid.*, diary 2 June 1920.
- 26 *Manchester Guardian*, 10 Nov. 1922.
- 27 Full result: Thomas Watts (Con) 11,678; E. D. Simon (Lib) 11,008.
- 28 Full result: E. D. Simon (Lib) 13,944; Thomas Watts (Con) 10,026.
- 29 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 addnl (495), diary 1922–3.
- 30 Hansard, H.C. Deb. (series 5) vol. 169, col. 437.
- 31 T. Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott 1911–1928* (London, 1970), p. 458.
- 32 Stocks, *Simon*, p. 74.
- 33 Wilson (ed.), *Scott Diaries*, p. 472.
- 34 Stocks, *Simon*, p. 74.
- 35 Lloyd George to Viscount Inchcape 5 Nov. 1924, cited R. Douglas, *History of the Liberal Party 1895–1970* (London, 1970), p. 184.
- 36 Full result: T. Watts (Con) 13,633; E. D. Simon (Lib) 10,435; E. Whitely (Lab) 2,467; K. Burke (Ind) 236.
- 37 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 addnl, diary 27 Feb. 1925.
- 38 R. Harrod, *The Life of John Maynard Keynes* (New York, 1951), p. 375.
- 39 Hodgson (ed.), *Ramsay Muir*, p. 183.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 D. Cregier, *Chiefs Without Indians* (Washington, 1982), p. 159.
- 42 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5, diary 1929–35.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 University of Liverpool, Veitch MSS D40/15, Muir to G. Veitch 25 Oct. 1928.
- 45 Full result: E. D. Simon (Lib) 20,948; T. Watts (Con) 19,063; J. Robertson (Lab) 7,853.
- 46 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5, diary 18 June 1929. The party leader had stressed what he intended to extract from the new government, rather than the scope for Liberal–Labour cooperation.
- 47 *Ibid.*, M 11/11/5 (496), Simon to R. Hutchison July 1930 (not sent).
- 48 Hansard, H.C. Deb. (series 5) vol. 230, cols 89–90.
- 49 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 (496), diary 27 July 1929. Emphasis added.
- 50 *Ibid.*, diary 6 Dec. 1929.
- 51 P. Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926–1932* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 110.
- 52 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 (496), diary 21 July 1930.
- 53 *Ibid.*, Simon to R. Hutchison July 1930 (not sent).
- 54 Flintshire Record Office, Morris-Jones MSS 10, diary 21 July 1930.
- 55 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 (496), diary 16 July 1930.
- 56 *Liberal Magazine*, Aug. 1930; E. D. Simon, 'Some questions about free trade', *Political Quarterly*, 1 (1930), pp. 479–95; P. Sloman, *The Liberal Party and the Economy, 1929–1964* (Oxford, 2015), p. 62.
- 57 R. Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929–1931* (London, 1967), p. 256.
- 58 *The Nation*, cited Stocks, *Simon*, p. 93.
- 59 See, for example, *Manchester Guardian* 4, 13, 15 and 22 Aug. 1930.
- 60 Simon MSS, M 11/11/5 (496), diary 3 July 1931.
- 61 Stocks, *Simon*, p. 91.
- 62 Full result: M. Petherick (Con) 16,388; E. D. Simon (Lib) 14,006; A. L. Rowse (Lab) 10,098.
- 63 It was an entirely appropriate designation. Since 1931 Simon had regarded himself as divorced from party politics.
- 64 D. Rundle, 'Ernest Simon 1879–1960' in D. Brack and E. Randall (eds.), *Dictionary of Liberal Thought* (London, 2007), p. 371.
- 65 Stocks, *Simon*, p. 110.
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- 67 Some will always wonder why Simon delayed his transfer of party allegiance for as long as he did. Many of his contemporaries, not obviously more sympathetic to Labour, made the transition as early as the 1920s. Reflective passages in Simon's diary provide some answers. To these we may speculatively add the influence of his mother, who was already active in Liberal politics before her son joined the Manchester City Council, and possibly a residual sense of loyalty to the party that had done much in the nineteenth century to secure the emancipation of British Jewry – though Simon, like his father before him, was a lifelong agnostic.
- 68 A. Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. iv (Oxford, 1979), p. 454.
- 69 Stocks, *Simon*, p. 139.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- 72 M. Hart, 'The Liberals, the War and the Franchise', *English Historical Review*, 97 (1982), p. 821.
- 73 Memorandum by A. J. Sylvester 6 Aug. 1934, cited Cregier, *Chiefs*, p. 251.
- 74 R. Muir, 'The Liberal Summer School and the Problems of Industry', *Contemporary Review* (1927), p. 286, cited Cregier, *Chiefs*, p. 161.
- 75 E. D. Simon, 'The Liberal Summer School', *Contemporary Review* (1926), p. 303, cited Cregier, *Chiefs*, p. 163.